

School of Theology at Claremont



1001 1388636

COURSE SERIES

THE STORY OF JOSEPH




Theology Library
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT
California

Sraus Thomson

Hibbing, Minn

Nov 1913.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2021 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

THE SHORT COURSE SERIES

THE STORY OF JOSEPH

GENERAL PREFACE

THE title of the present series is a sufficient indication of its purpose. Few preachers, or congregations, will face the long courses of expository lectures which characterised the preaching of the past, but there is a growing conviction on the part of some that an occasional short course, of six or eight connected studies on one definite theme, is a necessity of their mental and ministerial life. It is at this point the projected series would strike in. It would suggest to those who are mapping out a scheme of work for the future a variety of subjects which might possibly be utilised in this way.

The appeal, however, will not be restricted to ministers or preachers. The various volumes will meet the needs of laymen and

General Preface

Sabbath-school teachers who are interested in a scholarly but also practical exposition of Bible history and doctrine. In the hands of office-bearers and mission-workers the "Short Course Series" may easily become one of the most convenient and valuable of Bible helps.

It need scarcely be added that while an effort has been made to secure, as far as possible, a general uniformity in the scope and character of the series, the final responsibility for the special interpretations and opinions introduced into the separate volumes, rests entirely with the individual contributors.

A detailed list of the authors and their subjects will be found at the close of each volume.

Volumes Already Published

- A Cry for Justice: A Study in Amos.**
By Prof. JOHN E. MCFADYEN, D.D.
- The Beatitudes.**
Rev. ROBERT H. FISHER, D.D.
- The Lenten Psalms.**
By the EDITOR.
- The Psalm of Psalms.**
By Prof. JAMES STALKER, D.D.
- The Song and the Soil.**
By Prof. W. G. JORDAN, D.D.
- The Higher Powers of the Soul.**
By Rev. GEORGE M'HARDY, D.D.
- Jehovah-Jesus.**
By Rev. THOMAS WHITELAW, D.D.
- The Sevenfold *I Am*.**
By Rev. THOMAS MARJORIBANKS, B.D.
- The Man Among the Myrtles.**
By the EDITOR.
- The Story of Joseph.**
By Rev. ADAM C. WELCH, B.D., Th.D.
- The Divine Drama of Job.**
By Rev. CHARLES F. AKED, D.D.
- A Mirror of the Soul: Studies in the Psalter.**
By Rev. CANON VAUGHAN, M.A.
- In the Upper Room.**
By Rev. D. J. BURRILL, D.D., LL.D.

PRICE 60 CENTS NET PER VOLUME

✓
The Short Course Series NO. 10

EDITED BY
REV. JOHN ADAMS, B.D.

BS
1235.2

W4 THE
STORY OF JOSEPH

BY

ADAM C. WELCH, D.D.

PROFESSOR OF HEBREW AND OLD TESTAMENT EXEGESIS
NEW COLLEGE, EDINBURGH

AUTHOR OF

"THE RELIGION OF ISRAEL UNDER THE KINGDOM" AND
"ANSELM AND HIS WORK" (THE WORLD'S EPOCH-MAKERS)

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1913

TO
THE CONGREGATION
OF
CLAREMONT, GLASGOW
IN MEMORY OF ELEVEN YEARS
OF MUTUAL SERVICE

CONTENTS



	PAGE
I. JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN	1
II. JOSEPH THE SLAVE	17
III. JOSEPH AND THE CHIEF BUTLER	35
IV. JACOB	49
V. JOSEPH'S SUCCESS	67
VI. THE BRETHREN IN THE FAMINE	77
VII. THE RECONCILIATION	95
VIII. THE END: JOSEPH AND JACOB	107
APPENDIX	123
INDEX OF SUBJECTS	125

"FOR, as the highest gospel was a Biography, so is the life of every good man still an indubitable gospel, and preaches to the eye and heart and whole man, so that devils even must believe and tremble, these gladdest tidings. Man is heaven-born—not the thrall of circumstances, of necessity, but the victorious subduer thereof."

CARLYLE.

"O MY friend, cultivate the filial feelings ! and let no man think himself released from the kind charities of relationship : these shall give him peace at the last ; these are the best foundations for every species of benevolence. I rejoice to hear that you are reconciled with all your relations."

LAMB, Letter to Coleridge.

I

JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN

I

JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN

THE story of Joseph is one of the best written sections in the Pentateuch, and most men have delighted in it as children. Its obvious charm lies in its rapid change of surroundings, its rush of incident, its vivid portrayal of character, its power to show men through what they do and say. But later than childhood men learn to acknowledge its singular power. On the surface it is a charming rendering of the tale of the younger brother who is driven from home by the jealousy of his elders, but who makes for himself and his whole nation a new home and security. It pictures this in a country where strong passions are at home, where men drink when they are thirsty and stab when they are angry. Yet throughout it,

The Story of Joseph

not obtruded and never forgotten, runs the larger purpose. It appears much as it appears in human life, not thrusting itself on the attention, but quietly offering itself to the observant heart. Because of its presence, what might otherwise appear trivial becomes significant, what might be interesting becomes negligible. It forms the thread, on which the incidents are strung.

I. THE LARGER PURPOSE.

The larger purpose is the way in which a people came to be, and to be conscious of itself as possessing a peculiar heritage. Hitherto Scripture has told about men and their fortunes, about Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and how they lived in Palestine. Now, one begins to feel the wider horizons, and to foresee the larger movements of Sinai and the conquest. Soon the story will deal with a law which is to govern a nation, and with a nation which is set in a country of its own and which has its own institutions. Soon the great figures will stand out leading the tramp of a people. But before that comes

Joseph and His Brethren

into view, the story tells of the common ideals which made Israel a nation at all. It relates how they went down into Egypt ; but what interests the historian is how they were capable of remaining themselves there, and why they were capable of following any one who would lead them out again to a country, where they could be free to develop their peculiar culture and their distinctive faith. They went into Egypt, but Egypt could not keep them, for Egypt could not assimilate them and could not content them. They remained Israelites under that alien sky and in that strange land, waiting till God gave them a land in which they could be altogether themselves. Famine drove them down, and the land of the Nile fed them and gave them hospitable shelter ; but they had another famine which Egypt could not satisfy. So they remained Israel, aliens in a strange though hospitable land.

They were Israel, because of what God had been to their fathers. He had given them something which marked them off as His own. The historian believed that God had given them

The Story of Joseph

that distinctive character in order to make the record of the nation of Israel the story of God's widening purpose of redemption. To remain true to the best of all their past was a greater thing than the ordinary patriotic duty of loyalty to national traditions, it was to remain true to God and to His will with and for them. So he told the story of Joseph and his brethren, not merely because it was a charming story in itself, nor because it had gathered round the names of some of Israel's forefathers, but because it could make clear how God had a purpose for mankind through this little people, and how it was the character which came from serving that purpose that preserved them from extinction. They went down into Egypt, but they could not remain there, and their unwillingness to remain was due in part to the fact that God summoned them out, in part it was due to the fact that they were able to hear His summons. A later historian was to tell how God gave them a law and a leader: this historian tells how there was given them the temper which submits to a law and

Joseph and His Brethren

accepts a leader. A law and a leader are so useless without a prepared people.

To-day we read this account of the beginning of the national life out of the Bible, and the Bible is to us something quite apart from all other writings, alike in its origin and in its outlook. What it writes about is sacred history, and that is thought of as wholly distinct in character from any other kind of history. There is a certain gain in recognising that, when this story was written, it took up the tales which were told in Israel about their national past and wove them together into the unity which we have. It is possible here and there to detect how the writer has owed his material to different sources. He took the stories which men related about the deeds of their great men, and he showed their ideal elements and their higher side. Probably his account in its new shape became the source from which the maidens and young men of Israel learned all that they knew of their great national past. They read in this story of how Israel began, and, even as they read, they learned uncon-

The Story of Joseph

sciously how without its faith Israel would never have begun and could never have continued. They could not think about the great past of the nation without thinking of the faith which had made it great. They could not read about the heroes who had built up Israel without learning what were the qualities which had made them fit to lead Israel. And, as they found how faith in God kept their people through some of its hardest experiences, they looked for more from Him.

2. THE QUARREL.

There are many dark and dreadful things in human nature, but the darkest and the most dreadful is envy; and what makes envy so dark and so dreadful is that it is in human nature. It is not the vice of a few men, it is the vice of all men.

It leads to ugly results, such as the crime of which the ten brethren made themselves guilty, when they caught their younger brother and having lowered him into a cistern, went away for their dinner as

Joseph and His Brethren

though nothing had happened. They could not bear the idea that he might some day prove himself fit to be the chief over them. His dream and his naïve report of the dream were not the cause of their conduct to him. No man ever comes to be the chief over his brethren, because he has had a dream in which he saw the other sheaves bowing down to his sheaf ; nor were they so childish as to believe it. A man comes to be chief, because he is better fitted to control and guide the destinies of the family. The brethren sold Joseph into Egypt, not because he had had some boyish dreams which with a youth's self-conceit he had told abroad, but because they were anxious to get rid of the sight of his intolerable capacity. Envy hates capacity, because it sees in such a quality nothing except the certainty of being put into the shade by it. And at the prompting of envy all ties of kindly humanity and brotherhood are forgotten.

The ugliest result of the vice, however, is its unseen effect. It darkens the whole house of life to the men who cherish it.

The Story of Joseph

Let a man once admit it into his heart and keep it there, and it will banish all sweet wholesomeness from his nature and make much good impossible to him. Love and pity become alien to his soul, contentment with his own lot and a just pride in his own work disappear from his thoughts, justice begins to be twisted in its meaning, and all fair dealing grows difficult towards the man who is envied. When these things and such as these are occupying the house of life, God has not much place there, nor have his fellow-men a great consideration.

The brethren were men, when they did this thing, for envy is the peculiar vice of our prime. While boys are still at school, they are comparatively free from it. They can be proud then of the lad who makes the school team count for something, though his prowess at games puts the others into the shade. They can be gratified at the glory which comes to the school through sending out a fine scholar, though he left the others nothing except second prizes. They are greatly pleased to be seen in their

Joseph and His Brethren

hero's society. But when a man steps out beyond his contemporaries, he has to find out sadly enough that he rarely stands on the old footing with them. Let a man outstrip in the race those who began life with him, let him have a larger house or a little more success, and they do not meet him with the old ease of manner. They say that they are waiting to see whether he has not changed in his attitude to them, or will show himself the same as he once was. And even while they say such a thing to themselves, they betray how they expect to find him different, and so help to make him different.

It makes no real difference whether another man's promotion is at the cost of others: it does not even matter, though through his success he may have become better able to give help and encouragement. In every case men do well to be on their guard against the dreadful power of envy. There is no reason for it; there is no reason in it. It is both the basest and the most unreasonable passion which torments the lives of men, but that does not make it any

The Story of Joseph

less universal. It is the vice which makes one most sure that there is a radical twist in the soul of man.

The other vices can offer plausible reasons for coming to haunt the spirit and turn it from its high way. The sins of the flesh can offer some excuse for turning men to pursue base ends. In many such cases the devil can come and does come, robed as an angel of light, promising a great deal and really having something to give. But envy is a sin of the soul, which offers nothing, no personal advantage, no help, no promise. It relies on its own naked power, and it needs no more.

It creeps into many places. Men band themselves together for a good cause ; and envy, which broke up this family and set the ten brothers against the one, will break up a goodly company of apostles. It is often wise that a man should remind himself how every power, which his fellow-worker is developing in connection with a cause, in which both of them believe, is being used to further the cause they love and is a means

Joseph and His Brethren

to its swifter victory. He does well to remind himself, since otherwise he might find himself envious of a power for good which has been denied to himself. There are few things darker than the intrigues and jealousies which spring up inside the fellowship of those who have banded themselves together to help forward the world.

The ten brothers envied Joseph, and being primitive men, they dropped him into a cistern, and afterwards, when the opportunity was offered, sold him into slavery. If they had been more civilised, they would have found some more delicate means of effecting their end. But one thing which Scripture does is to take the naked and primitive vices, and show these bringing about results which modern conditions of life make impossible. It suggests how, if the man be left unchanged, his means may alter, but his aims will remain the same. Envy makes men want to prove themselves superior to the envied man, though it were only after the clumsy fashion of the bludgeon.

The Story of Joseph

There Scripture leaves the ten brothers for a time, and turns to follow the fate of Joseph. It does that, not merely because the story begins to reveal wider horizons and to deal with the future of the race, nor merely because Joseph, through his contact with Egypt, has a large and fruitful future both for himself and for his people. It does this, because there is a good reason why Joseph has a large and fruitful future. He is a wholesome man. The ten brothers have suffered the rank weed of envy to govern and possess their souls: out of natures, which are so possessed, no large or wholesome thing can spring. It is only possible to win a generous and gracious future out of something which in itself is more clean and rich. What the ten men need, in order to make Israel a name by which the world shall bless, is more than the land of Palestine or a supply of corn for the time of drought; it is a new spirit, which shall weld them together, not in a mutual conspiracy, but in a brotherhood. Had they been made sure of Palestine in

Joseph and His Brethren

their present temper and preserved from the coming famine, they would only have given the world what it has already. The narrator follows Joseph into Egypt, because from there he brought back or sent back more than corn. He asserted there the faith, which knows what to do with corn, and the brotherhood, which can master envy and revenge. He gave the spirit which could make Israel a nation and a blessing to the world in which God made its work possible.

II

JOSEPH THE SLAVE

II

JOSEPH THE SLAVE

IT was as hard a test of worth as any to which a man has ever been exposed. Joseph had, no doubt, been a little difficult to live with, and not always wise. He may have been somewhat arrogant in relating his dreams, and ill-advised when he carried tales about his brethren to the old father. But the situation was one of extraordinary difficulty. The lad was of a higher type than his brethren, with a richer nature and a sweeter strain in him. He heard things spoken of and saw deeds done which were hidden from the eyes of Jacob. And the sins of his brethren were not the trifling peccadilloes of childhood about which all boys feel a fierce resentment, when one of their number carries the account to the

The Story of Joseph

authorities. The men were men : their sins were the coarse, far-reaching crimes of men. They were capable of dropping their brother into a cistern, and taking their dinner without allowing themselves to be disturbed by his cries. These and such as these were the rude surroundings in which Joseph's life as a youth was spent. To any youth of finer moral feeling and surer spiritual insight, it must have been a sore burden to see his father's house lapsing back into the barbarism from which it had promised for a time to rise. And, even if he did not realise the scope of their failure, there was the instinctive revolt of sweet cleanness against a moral disorder. The only one who could understand was the old father, whose sons had grown beyond him. To him the lad went with his spiritual distress and in his impotence. His complaint was more than tale-bearing : it was the means to lighten his heart.

I. HIS NATURAL SUPERIORITY.

Joseph's dreams were controlled in some measure by the same element in him. No

Joseph the Slave

doubt they were in part prompted by the unwise favouritism of the father, who gave his beloved son the sleeved coat of a ruler without teaching him the self-restraint by which alone he could become capable of rule. But the dreams were also the forecast of his innate capacity. He had something in him which could make him stand alone and which should compel men to do him homage. The future for the race lay, not in the coarser powers of the brothers, but in the powers by which Joseph was superior to them, and of which he could not remain wholly unconscious in himself. He had hold of something which they did not yet acknowledge. To him life had richer issues and a higher aim : and the future and the power to control the future were there. Because he held this loftier faith, he was already the superior of his brethren ; and the days to come must only make more undeniable his superiority.

There must always be, especially in the beginning, a touch of arrogance in any man who knows that he has something to say

The Story of Joseph

or do, which other men will be compelled to acknowledge. The Christian man, who believes he has attained to what other men are seeking, often has the appearance of being a superior person. He knows he is not merely groping after life's secret, but that through God's mercy he has reached it. He is not simply a seeker, but he has found the end of life. He has the victory. Small wonder that, especially at first, he irritates so many of those with whom he comes in contact. It is true that the sense of how everything he has is his through the divine grace, the further sense of how all he holds he holds for the good of men, will make his judgment more gentle and take the edge off his superiority. Yet the spiritual man judgeth all, while he himself is judged of none. The man who knows the highest end of life and the secret of its attainment will have to utter them. Though he should restrain his speech and bear no public testimony, the fact that he severs himself from other men's pursuits and cannot share in some of their interests, is his most

Joseph the Slave

eloquent testimony. He does not need to say how deeply he differs, when once he has quietly ceased to share the common interests and hopes. The measure, too, of his faith in the truth of the ends he seeks, is the measure of his confidence that ultimately they are going to win. The others will need, sooner or later, to come bowing to what he knows to be true. The men who hold his faith have the future and the control of it. He must believe that too, if he believes in his faith at all. He may not utter it with the naïveté of Joseph, but he cannot help believing it: and, since he believes it, somehow or other it will control his conduct and betray itself in the things he does.

There is no clash in life like the clash of two opposing ideals, two opposite ends for life itself. There is no difficulty in the home or the State like the difficulty of determining how men, who hold opposite views of the ends for which life is lived at all, can still succeed in living and working together. We have heard much of the

The Story of Joseph

intolerance of Churchmen and their crude methods of silencing opposition. Perhaps we shall hear more in these later days of the intolerance of irreligious men. The cistern, into which the brethren dropped Joseph, was a clumsy way of escaping from a life which made the others uneasy. And the irritation which the pagan showed to the early Christians, the irritation which the Cavalier felt in the presence of the Puritan, the intolerance of the artistic and literary world for the evangelical, are the reminder of how easily the cistern could be reopened.

Without doubt, Joseph was unwise in the way in which he expressed his thoughts. He was face to face with one of the most difficult practical questions which are ever set to men to answer: and he was still young. How, without seeming a very superior person, to say something that bears on the intimate conduct of life and that one cannot neglect without disloyalty, and especially how to say it to men who are older than oneself, when to be silent and when to speak, how to express one's con-

Joseph the Slave

victions so as to make them most effective—these are matters which are not discovered in a day. Joseph, no doubt, needed the discipline of living in a large family. A lad, who can live among ten brothers in the same house and about the same work and who can grow up either a braggart or a superior person, must be singularly incapable of learning from the discipline to which they are likely to submit him. But not this kind of discipline! His old father rebuked his favourite son for the vanity which pierced through his expression of his convictions; but he pondered the saying, for he was wise enough to recognise that his son might be right. The ten flung him into the cistern and sold him to the Midianites. Joseph had to begin life all anew, a slave in Potiphar's house, and a slave who was there, because his brothers had sold him.

2. HIS BEARING UNDER TRIAL.

Yet nothing seemed able to spoil a fundamentally sweet and wholesome nature. He was already too big and real a man,

The Story of Joseph

living too close to the things which matter, to be determined by circumstances. Suppose Joseph had been merely a proud, hard spirit. He would have brooded over the wrong which he had received, and allowed the outrage from his brothers to master him. He would have allowed it to darken his temper, and shut out the appeal of the living world which was still all round him and in which it was still possible for him to find a place. Men are often tempted to retort on the world with the weapons which they believe it has used toward them. They count it a fine thing to meet coldness with coldness, injustice with injustice. It is not a fine thing at all, for it is an acknowledgment of defeat. So to do is to suffer oneself to be beaten by circumstances at the very outset : it is to surrender one's soul to be controlled by the accidents of life, instead of keeping its control in one's own hands. And out of it can come nothing except the perpetuation of weakness and distrust and wrong.

Suppose, again, he had been an easily

Joseph the Slave

cowed, really mean spirit with no inward resources. It would at once have seemed sure to him that, because his brothers had lost their tempers with him and treated him vilely, therefore the world was all vile, and life was nothing except a game of chance. And for all the wholesome uses of life he would have been a soured and spoiled man. He would have said the customary bitter things against human nature and human life. And so, even if he had put his hand to his work and done it, he would have done it, merely because he must, without zest in it, without the desire of helping any other human spirit thereby. Hope and spring would have gone out of his life ; and, for all the real uses of this world, he would have been a spoiled man.

With a cheerful and indomitable heart, Joseph frankly took up the life which was left him. It was novel : it was humiliating : it promised little. But he took it as he found it, and he put the best of which he was capable into it. He was in prison, and he was a slave ; but he had a place, such as

The Story of Joseph

it was. He laid hold of Potiphar's work, and he did it with zest.

He was an innocent man, foully wronged. But, instead of turning his thoughts to the fact of his innocence in order to think how badly he had been treated, and so making his very innocence into a means of embittering his life and souring himself against life, he kept it as a means of communing with all high and sacred thoughts. He found his way right out beyond the condition in which he was set to the source and spring of all clean and honest thought and living. He found in it an impulse for more active and zealous service.

The Lord was with him. How could it be otherwise? The Lord is with all men : "whither shall I flee from Thy presence," or how may any man be where God is not? But men so often shut the door to God's mercy, and make their lives impenetrable to His presence. And he who does it most constantly and most effectually is the man with a grievance against life. A man with a grievance is one of the most difficult things

Joseph the Slave

to reach at all. He cannot be got at. He has shut himself up from his fellow-men, and he would fain shut himself up from God.

The suffering of a good man is often a hard question to those who look at it from the outside ; but it is as often no grievous thing to him who is passing through it. The suffering touches their outward life, but within the Lord is with them, and is realised the more, because they are more dependent on Him than they once were. They need Him more, and ask for more ; and he who seeketh findeth. As the Lord was with him, Joseph came to believe that his God cared for him and for all through which he was required to pass, cared that he should do manfully what was still within his reach, cared that he should remain wholesome and sweet-natured in slavery.

So he kept more than his personal zest in life, he kept also his sympathy with other men. He had a heart at leisure from itself to see that the two men, who were flung into the prison beside him, were helpless and

The Story of Joseph

frightened men. He went out of his way to comfort and help them. Men had not proved themselves very generous to him, but that was evidently no reason why he should be indifferent to them. He made it his business—for, unless he had made it so, it really was none of his business what became of the chief baker and head butler—he made it his business to see whether he could help them over this hard time in their lives. He listened to their troubles, as though he never had had any of his own.

3. HIS REWARD.

By so doing, it may be thought that Joseph only took fresh troubles on himself. That were a great mistake. His act helped him as much at least as it helped them. It kept him from the sour brooding over his condition and his wrongs, it lifted him into the glad sense of usefulness, it brought him away to the recognition of how much still lay within his power. The quality of self-forgetfulness, like that of mercy, is twice blessed ; and the blessing which it brings on

Joseph the Slave

him who forgets himself is at least as great as any which he confers.

And so his master trusted him. That was an inevitable result. A man of such a nature wins other men's trust and is fit to appreciate the incalculable prize he has won. There is an imperishable charm about a willing service, which is not nicely reckoned according to immediate reward. And the reward, which is implied in such trust, makes the heart of its receiver larger and his nature richer. The fact that his master trusted him, a slave, not even born in his house, but bought in the public market, came back to stay Joseph's heart in the hour of his temptation. For, when his master's wife tempted him, he reminded her with grave sweet dignity of the trust which had been put in him by his master. All that he hath is under my hand, except you, his wife. Slave as he was, with no rights in the house, and therefore, as men glibly conclude, with no duties, he remembered how Potiphar had honoured him with his faith.

On that temptation, which has come to be

The Story of Joseph

associated with his name, it is needless to dwell long, for the simple reason that, as most men come to learn, it is the characteristic of the vice that even to think about its danger and ugliness can do harm. There is probably no side of human life on which it is so true that the way of escape does not come through thinking how noxious it is, but comes through thinking of things that are pure and honourable and of good report. Yet, when the Jewish historian speaks of it as befalling Joseph, he recognises frankly how in one form or another every man in this world and probably most women must meet it.

What is noteworthy is first the way in which Joseph met it. He speaks of it as treachery to his master who trusted him, and to his God who trusted him more. As she listened, the woman might have heard in his words the reminder of how her husband trusted her with more than he ever committed to his slave. He trusted her with his good name and with his honour, and she is ready to trail both in the mud at the bidding

Joseph the Slave

of her passions. It is the selfishness of all such vice, with its power to break up mankind into greedy atoms, which seek nothing and see nothing but their own pleasure, called sometimes their own self-development, that makes its bane. It saps honour, loyalty and truth. And, when all the glozing words have been uttered to make the vice in all its forms less foul, that remains true.

The other noteworthy fact in Joseph's attitude is his silence before the accusation. He denied his own guilt, but he made no counter-charge, and he went back to his prison with his lips sealed. It may be that he felt how his master was one of the few men who had treated him with justice. Potiphar took him to be a slave and promoted him to honour in his household ; and the memory of what the man had done may have kept Joseph silent, when he had the power to sow suspicion of the wife in the mind of his master. Joseph's continence is high, but this mercy and loyalty to the bread he has eaten are higher still. For what adds to

The Story of Joseph

its greatness is that there was only one man in Egypt whose good opinion Joseph had reason to prize. And he had to forego that and suffer under the suspicion that he had been a lecherous traitor.

III

JOSEPH AND THE CHIEF BUTLER

III

JOSEPH AND THE CHIEF BUTLER

THE plot of Joseph's life as a slave moves largely along the line of what he had to bear from other men and of how he faced it. The writer does not describe his hero's feelings, nor does he dwell on the painful conditions of the prison or the slave-yard. He brings Joseph into contact with different women and men who deal, according to their different natures, with the slave-boy, and then, often leaving the reader to supply the motives, always leaving him to supply the attendant emotions, he tells simply how Joseph acted.

I. THE SIN OF INGRATITUDE.

The chief butler, who had promised to befriend his benefactor, had no sooner escaped

The Story of Joseph

from the fear of death than he forgot all about him. Ingratitude is a bitter thing to meet for the first time. It is true that Joseph had not freed the butler, but had merely interpreted the man's dream. It was Pharaoh who had freed him. But Joseph had given him heart and hope when the man was discovering how lonely a favoured courtier can be in his day of adversity. And, when his day of prosperity returned, he forgot his solitary friend. That was in its own degree somewhat harder to bear than any of Joseph's previous trials, because the butler owed him something. When his brothers had resented his claim of superiority over them, a man with some humour might recognise that the situation was difficult. Potiphar's wife had proved that "hell hath no fury like a woman scorned," and might imagine that she had some reason for resentment against the indifferent foreigner, whom she had so greatly honoured with her regard. But this man had talked largely of gratitude, had volunteered a promise of help and had forgotten.

Joseph and the Chief Butler

Perhaps there was a certain advantage to Joseph's character in the fact that he did not succeed at once through the good offices of the chief butler. He had tried for the first time his power of the interpretation of dreams, and had carefully said that, in doing it, he was but the intermediary between God and man, for "the interpretation belongeth to God." If his first work of the kind had brought him to signal honour, it might have made him forget that fact. A man who discovers his power as a preacher runs a great risk. He believes that he is no more than the spokesman of a higher truth which is entrusted to him. But he finds that he can interest men a good deal and even move them a little ; he finds success. Then comes the risk that he should aim at the success, and for its sake palter a little with his convictions. He can make the truth more telling by heightening the colours here and by toning them down there. When men win success soon, they believe that they have got it, instead of the work which they have done having deserved it. They think less of

The Story of Joseph

the worth of the work and more of themselves.

It was a steadying thing for Joseph to be left in prison. That is not said by way of excuse for the butler. Nothing can excuse him. God can use even the wrath of man as a means of discipline for other men's souls, but He does not thereby make man's wrath a holy thing.

2. THE DEEPENING OF JOSEPH'S CHARACTER.

But Joseph heard of the chief butler's elevation : he saw his own interpretation of the dream come true : he saw what he had done in the matter passed by. He was left to the weary routine of policing the prisoners, as though he had never interpreted a dream in his life. And it flung him back on the recognition of the power which was in him, as something which was not given for his own advancement but for God's ends. It made him think of it anew as a strange dowry from Heaven, whatever might be its outcome for himself. He was left to realise the

Joseph and the Chief Butler

sustaining idea that he was serving a higher purpose and a divine will. He was compelled to recognise how that was something which no man could take away from him, and which depended on no man's recognition. He learned that he could do without the outward recognition, and keep the strong sense that he was an instrument in God's hands for a wondrous end.

That calm sense awes and steadies a man, lending him character and dignity. And so, when Pharaoh, having dreamed a dream which none of his court interpreters can expound, learns that there is a gifted lad in the slave-yard of Potiphar and sends for him, Joseph bears himself like no slave, but as God's freeman. He stands before Pharaoh as one who knows how beyond Pharaoh is God, and who knows also that a man who has tried to realise all that is implied in being God's instrument, has no occasion to vex himself overmuch about his treatment in the court of kings.

At that time the reading of dreams was a business which men could learn as they

The Story of Joseph

learned any other business, and to which they applied complicated rules. Pharaoh had his professional seers who combined with their other work the special task of reading dreams, and who qualified themselves for it. When Joseph came before them with the record of a successful interpretation of the butler's dream, it was natural that they should see in him only a cleverer man than themselves, who had sources of information that were hidden from them. Evidently Joseph shared their opinion as to the power to read dreams, and probably he believed that they had that power. He did not differ from the common opinions of the time in which he lived; he merely believed that his God could reveal Himself and His will through that means. But he referred all his power to God. As he had insisted to the butler, so he insisted to Pharaoh, that the interpretation was from the Almighty, and that he was no more than the instrument in God's hands. And he bore himself as one who was no more, yet who was that. Is not this the attitude which a man, no matter what

Joseph and the Chief Butler

may be his view as to the method by which God reveals His will to men, ought to take in the matter? Through taking it he is on the way to learn a worthier thought of the means by which God comes to men.

It is remarkable to recognise that these were the stories about their heroes which young Jews learned as children, and which sank down into their very constitution and make of mind. Here was the ideal which the Jewish faith set up for men. This fine courage and indomitable pluck, this holding on to manly honour in spite of all opposition and temptation, this power of self-control in not suffering other men's ingratitude and inhumanity to sour the wholesome soul, this gracious, humane compassion which went on doing helpful things for other men, and above all this deep well of principle and faith in God feeding the inward life and flowing out in the quiet power to conquer circumstance—these were the high qualities which they associated with the men who had made Israel. Israel endured and remained

The Story of Joseph

Israel, so long as it could breed men of such a temper.

When one has thought of all this, it is not difficult to understand why the narrator left the brothers to follow Joseph into Egypt. They went back to their father, with their younger brother's coat dabbled in blood and a glib lie on their lips. He went down into Egypt, disinherited and a slave. But the future of Israel and its religion went with him. He would some day provide them all with a home and sufficient food in the famine ; but that was the least part of his gift. He and he alone could provide them with any vision of hope and duty, with any knowledge of God and truth. There was nothing for the world which could come out of the ten, as they then were. Everything could come out of the one man who, disinherited, lonely, poor, a slave, held fast by his integrity, because he held fast by his God. The hope of the world was there.

Joseph and the Chief Butler

3. THE INCALCULABLE ELEMENT IN RELIGION.

Joseph is an incalculable and invincible force, because he is a religious man. A religious man is always one about whom it is impossible at any time to say how far he will go and how much he will bear. A man who holds by this world, who is governed by its sanctions and upheld by its support, is a calculable force. It is possible to reckon how much he will bear and where he will break down. He lives by what all men may see, and his power is according to the pressure which circumstances put upon him. But a man who has his reserve forces in the things which are not of this world, is apt to rise above circumstances and to mould life to serve an end which life itself does not supply and cannot control.

Israel was to go down into Egypt and become subject to conditions which it would never have chosen and could not control. The untoward circumstances, first of sur-

The Story of Joseph

rounding heathenism, afterwards of bondage, were God's will for them : and they were to submit and to learn how to live above them. If they had faith, the bondage could become a new thing. It was not merely tolerable, because they were able to live beyond it ; it had a meaning and a promise. Men could expect something out of this bitter experience. Gibbon says somewhere that all which religious men seem to need, in order to explain the difficulties of God's moral government of the world, is to call the afflictions of one set of men divine chastisements on the wicked, the troubles of another set of men the trials and discipline of their faith. The historian implied the sneering suggestion of how men in religious matters often play with words. Perhaps, as he wrote, he underrated the power of the human soul to transcend untoward outward conditions. What men call things determines and reveals what they think about them. What men think about them determines as surely the attitude which they adopt toward such things, and the influence

Joseph and the Chief Butler

which they permit these to have over their life. And that really determines everything, for it decides what men become through their surroundings.

Because Joseph believed that in what seemed to wreck his life God would uphold him, because he could lift up his heart to Him who is over all, the outcome of his captivity was not to crush him, but to make him more independent on outward events, more dependent on spiritual powers. Therefore he gave his people more than corn and a shelter. He gave his people a new spiritual uplift.

IV

JACOB

IV

JACOB

NOWHERE is the art of the narrator more clearly shown than in his picture of Jacob's old age. He pervades the story, although he appears so little in direct evidence. Wherever he does appear, his acts and his speech are so simply in keeping with his situation as an old man, and, it may be added, with what he has been. He has largely fulfilled his part, a part filled with strenuous and varied activity, and now he begins to fade into the background of the piece. When he does emerge, it is not to take prominent action any more. Other figures occupy the active and eager foreground, while he stands back as part of the surroundings. Yet always one is compelled to feel behind the strenuous figures

The Story of Joseph

that fill the foreground the greatness of him who stands behind. He is never negligible, never less than himself. Jacob's active life is past, but his influence is not, his real power is not. He does not thrust himself forward, but he is always referred to and consulted. He is recognised as forming the final court of appeal. His word carries weight, though the arm which once rolled the stone from the well mouth is paralysed. It is a gracious picture of what old age might be, equally honourable to both sides. He is not meddlesome, but commands deference by the width of his experience and the weight of his character.

I. A LINK IN THE CHAIN.

"Jacob dwelt in the land of his fathers' sojournings: now these are the generations of Jacob." Behind him lies a great and gallant history, and now the history is sweeping out past him to larger horizons. Those for whom he has made life free and possible are being called to play their part. Before he goes, he has time given him to

Jacob

feel, not merely to think with his head but to feel with his heart, how he is but a passing incident, a link between the generations. Behind him are Abraham and Isaac, before him are the generations of Jacob. He is the bearer of the tradition which shall bind these generations together.

He watches the hot and eager youths break out into the untried fields of life. To them it is all so new, and so much is to be won there by the strength of their own right arms. But he knows, with the patient wisdom of age, that the thing which has been is that which shall be. Only he does not thrust his wisdom on his sons or on anybody. When, however, they are baffled by the new experience of famine, terrified by the novel thing which they have never seen before, bewildered by something in which their strength is useless, they come back to the old man in the tent. And he jibes lightly at them. Things will never come right through your sitting down to look at one another. Egypt used to be Abraham's granary. Go down and buy corn

The Story of Joseph

there ; and go now, or you may grow too weak to go at all.

He has learned not only the practical wisdom which knows the value of prompt action. He has learned to consider what seem trifles and to ponder what to others are negligible facts. When Joseph tells his ambitious dream, the account makes his father thoughtful. He sees, perhaps, how his own trifling gift of the sleeved coat has stirred the ambition of Joseph, and how the young man's mind has begun to awake to its native power. Jacob remembers a day when Rebecca, being ambitious for her son, put a savoury mess of kid's flesh into his hands and bade him carry it into Isaac's tent. He recognises how out of so trifling an event has come all this life which he and his sons now share. The brethren see in the dream the conceited fancy of a spoiled boy ; and they grow hot and angry in the desire to snub the dreamer. Jacob sees the awaking of the sense of power, the kindling of self-confidence in a man. He ponders it, because it is big with great issues.

Jacob

The sons have the privilege of youth, its privilege of seeing little and having few hesitations. Hence they take swift action, so soon as Joseph annoys them. But Jacob knows how much has gone to make them, how it is the land of his fathers' sojournings in which they live. Their work is all conditioned by a past which they have been too impatient to recognise, and into the spirit of which they have never thought it necessary to enter. Their life has been made possible and is being moulded by factors and elements of which they never dream. Jacob is the bearer of a mighty tradition: and the ten sons have not had the wisdom to serve themselves heirs to its meaning. Joseph is nearer it than they. He has something of the spiritual temper, the moral alertness which made Abraham arise to find a land where he might serve God, and which guided Isaac while he lived there. Since the past has given the land to the men who had these qualities, it is possible that the control of the future will come to the man who has inherited them. Jacob ponders

The Story of Joseph

the dreams, because they may after all be true.

Little is said about Jacob's inner life, until at its very close he himself tells what were the things which meant most to him—the first altar he built and the first grave he dug. The silence is largely due to the fact that, after stormy passages, the life has found its great lines of development. When voyagers set out over dim and perilous seas, it is fascinating to hear of what befell them on the way, and how they bore themselves before unexpected dangers. But, when they have reached their haven and built their homes, interest in their proceedings is apt to flag, for they do in their homes very much what all men do, work and are happy. It is difficult to interest men in happiness. When the soul has found its peace, its blessedness is hard to describe. What God's fellowship means, only the spirit which lives in it can rightly measure, but it can never rightly tell. Not only because the matter is too large for utterance, but because it is difficult to tell what bread does. It satisfies.

Jacob

The contented heart finds its satisfaction in God. Jacob has had more difficulty than many men to conquer himself and learn the peace of God's will : but that fills the heart of the wise, patient old man who sits in his tent in the evening of his life with the knowledge of how few are the things which cannot be borne.

To him comes the news that his favourite son is dead. Death is a sore test ; for, when a man has learned how few things are indispensable, he grapples the few things more closely to his heart ; and love is chief among the few. The death of a child is a terrible test to a father as to whether he can any longer believe that the Ruler of all means well by him. Jacob believed that not only had his hope in his favourite son come to an end, but that the one of his race who could carry on the great tradition had been cut off. To him, as he crouches in his tent over the stained robe, it seems as though not only his hope, but the hope of Israel, had come to an end. To the narrator, as he tells the story, there are present the fulfilment of all

The Story of Joseph

Jacob ever attempted and the beginning of a vaster achievement. God has His purpose to fulfil : and behind man's envy and human hunger is He who can guide all things so that they bring to pass His will.

2. WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN—A DREAM.

There was a man who had a vision. And in his dream it seemed that he stood on a mound in the desert beside the caravan-track which runs through Edom to the frontier of Egypt, and that an angel stood on his right hand. It was night, but a crescent moon hung clear in the sky. By its light he could see a group of black tents at the wayside, and even, since one of these had been left open to the night air, could see the five men and a lad who occupied it. The boy was a captive, for his hands and feet were bound ; but, while the others slept, he had gnawed through the thong on his right wrist, and was writhing himself free from his bonds with the silent supple movements of a healthy animal. As he writhed, a yellow cur began to bay the moon outside, and the sound

Jacob

threatened to wake one of the men, who already turned uneasily in his sleep.

A great passion of sympathy with the captive boy, one against five, ran through the watcher, and he made as though he would strangle or drive away the baying cur. But the angel touched him on the arm to say, "You may not meddle with these, for they are real." Turning him round, however, he showed the same scene on the other side, and said "You may do what you will with these."

So the man, being very sure of his own purpose and its wisdom, drove away the baying cur, so that the sleeper merely grunted once or twice in his sleep, and then lay still. The lad was able to steal out of the tent unheeded, and, breathing deeply once or twice, to run for liberty. All the night he ran, steering by the stars: all the day he hid, to sleep and prepare for further flight. When dawn was breaking on the second day, he ran into the tent of an old man, who held a stained cloak even in his broken sleep. The two fell into each

The Story of Joseph

other's arms, and the man who had the vision was more satisfied than ever with the thing he had done.

The scene shifted, as scenes do in our dreams, and leave us undisturbed by the rapid change. All the land lay panting under a long drought. The cracked and gaping earth yielded nothing, for the streams had dried up. Men in Canaan ate the last of their poor stores, and at last, when nothing was left, set off Southward to see whether they might yet find corn in Egypt. But, when they reached the frontier, they found it closely guarded to prevent any from passing that way. The famine was in Egypt, and there had been none to advise the storing of the provision from the plenteous years. So Egypt permitted no more hungry mouths to enter her territory, and set a patrol to guard her frontier. Wearily the travellers turned to go, but with the death of hope half their number died. The weak and the old and the little children dropped beside the route, where men had no heart left to bury them. And, when the

Jacob

strongest came back to Palestine, the Canaanite devoured the remnant. The fairest of the women went into Phœnician harems, and bore children who were taught to worship Baal and Ashtoreth. The men were drafted into slave-gangs, tugged at the oars of the Tyrian war-galleys, died in the Tarshish mines.

The Canaanite waxed strong in the land, so strong that, when Assyria and Babylonia broke into the West, he was able to withstand their onset. Tyre and Sidon leagued themselves together, gave unity of purpose to all the Canaanites, and were able to resist the attack from the East. They began to stretch out their arms over the coveted Mediterranean, from access to which they had held back the new-comers, and to build up colonies. Carthage in North Africa, Massilia in France, Tarshish in Spain, had already succoured the mother country against the wasting of Asshurbani-pal and the rush of Nebuchadrezzar ; and their success bound them more closely together and made them more insolent in their

The Story of Joseph

strength. They set themselves to turn the Mediterranean into a Canaanite lake.

The dreamer was now in Rome; and it was not Rome, confident in her power, selling the site of Hannibal's tent in open market, but Rome, hunger-bitten and afraid, gathering her strength for a last struggle with Carthage. She had conquered once and twice, but her victories had been wasted, for beaten Carthage had called on unbeaten Tyre, and Tyre had sent triremes, warriors, food. Rome was at her last resources. The dreamer saw a slow procession wind down from the Capitol, where the leaders had gone up to make their vows to the gods and pray for their protection. He stood at Ostia and saw them embark on the last ships Rome could equip for what must decide her fate. And in the crowd which watched with him he saw no able-bodied men, he noted that the very cordage of some of the triremes was made of the hair of women, he felt that the public treasury was drained to the last sesterces.

He watched the triremes go, and he

Jacob

watched till he saw one come back like a wounded bird, trailing its slow way across the sea to announce that to-morrow the Carthaginians would be in Ostia.

He looked abroad and saw all Europe. In it there was no Rome with her law, no Judæa with her faith. No Roman had marched out, planting his firm feet on the lands, sending his long sure roads across mountain and morass to bind the nations into one, and to teach them the meaning of an ordered peace. And there had been no Judæa to lift before the vision of the men who travelled on those roads, the promise of the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. There was nothing but the Canaanite with his cynical worship of the power of money, his radical disbelief in human liberty, his sweating slave-gangs and his beastly gods.

And, as the man looked and bethought himself, he remembered how in his self-confidence he had silenced the yellow cur that bayed the moon. As he remembered, he bowed his head between his knees to

The Story of Joseph

weep over the thing he had done. But, as he bent, the angel stooped, and raising him up, turned his face the other way.

3. A GLIMPSE OF WHAT WAS, AND IS.

There was the desert with the caravan road winding through it. The crescent moon was paling out before the dawn. The cool breeze was making early travel pleasant, and southward, swinging down the long road to Egypt was a bunch of camels. High on the back of one was Joseph, the bond-slave of Midian, the bond-slave of God's purpose in His world.

Men are but shuttles flung to and fro by the hand of Omnipotence ; but, as He flings them, He weaves evermore His own purpose, the ends of His Providence, the aims of His redemption. And the Hebrew believed, not only that there was such a purpose, but that it was given to him to know something of its meaning. The thoughts of God were very great, but were not strange thoughts to him. They were controlled not only by an omnipotence which he could never fathom,

Jacob

but by a wisdom which he was invited to share, and by a love and pity on which he could rely. Because he believed it, he put his hand to his work, weak and faltering though it was, with a new humility and a new confidence, for it was taken up and fulfilled by the might of God. The faith gave him victory over the world ; for, having it, he could endure captivity and put the world under his feet.

“Jacob dwelt in the land of his fathers’ sojournings : now these are the generations of Jacob.” A man is but the link between the past and the future, yet he may bind them together by faith in the unseen Providence which controls them both.

V

JOSEPH'S SUCCESS

V

JOSEPH'S SUCCESS

THE narrative shifts to a new scene. Joseph is past the struggles of poverty. Freed from the prison, he has gained money and power and an assured position in Egypt. He is past all his trials, we are apt to think ; but that is not the view of the Hebrew writer. To him Joseph is only past the trials of poverty, and has now to face the greater trial of possessions. He has said good-bye to the temptations of the slave, and has now to meet the temptations of the free and powerful. And so the writer does not merely relate how Joseph won liberty and money and power ; he tells also what Joseph did with these things after they were won, and especially he tells what Joseph did when he had power over the brothers who had wronged

The Story of Joseph

him. In that he saw a test of manhood and faith.

I. THE TOUCHSTONE OF CHARACTER.

It was one of the conventions of the older novelists that the hero was brought after many strenuous efforts to the church door and was there dismissed, a married man. So far as it recognised that a man then reached a great end of right effort, it was no mean convention, since it realised that he who has won love has won the best thing in the world's gift, better even than runners before one's chariot or multitudes bowing the knee. But it was a weak convention in so far as it failed to see that what makes men is the habitual attitude they take to the great things of life after they have won them. What a man does with his money after he has made it, how he bears himself to love when he has won it, go to determine his spiritual manhood.

Yet it is unhappily true that many men grow uninteresting after they have gained some assured position. The desire even for

Joseph's Success

outward success in life, and for a place in which a man's personal influence tells, quickens the spiritual faculties. We are watchful then, we show self-control and patience, we strengthen our will to do and bear. But when the goal we have set to ourselves is reached, how often the life becomes relaxed, and at once the man becomes a lay figure on which his outward trappings are hung. Men feel that he has grown less interesting, and so he has. The man is hidden behind things.

Success is a test to every institution as well as to every man. There is hardly a finer record of a spiritual struggle bravely fought out than the story of the Ten Years Conflict. One of the things which are finer, is the Disruption in which it issued. For clear assertion of principle, for patient re-assertion of it after it was aspersed, for readiness to sacrifice much toward its final victory, it has little to set beside it in Scottish Church history. Then came the period of success, and with success weakness which the period of struggle had not shown. For then came

The Story of Joseph

the inclination to lean on past deeds instead of using them as Christ's summons to a nobler service. Then came the claim to possess truth as a peculiar property of one Church, instead of the recognition that it was a gift of God's grace to men.

God's grant of success is a subtle touchstone. It forms the test of whether men have really set their heart on a spiritual thing, on liberty as the means to do what they like, or as the necessary means to listen for a higher voice and to obey. If a man have set his heart on a great thing, he will accept God's gift of success as a means of winning the great thing, and will grow stronger thereby. If he have set his heart on a little thing, he will take his success and sit down to enjoy it.

Perhaps one thing which helped to steady Joseph in his hour of brilliant recognition was that the thing he won was so far beyond what he could ever have hoped to gain. His success came to him, a gift, surprising and strange, from men. And it came, not merely because of his ability, but because of his

Joseph's Success

character. He interprets Pharaoh's dream. When the courtiers are bewildered before the thought of the unexpected misfortune which is about to fall upon themselves and their country, he tells what must be done to meet the emergency. The men were, of course, impressed by the power to interpret the dream ; but what manifestly impressed them most was the bearing of the man who was the means of interpreting it. Here was a man who had the fear of God before his eyes, who had clean hands, whose character had been braced by adversity, who had shown himself capable of considering not his own interests only, but the interests of his master and his fellow-slaves. He was fit to do more than interpret dreams, he was fit to hold power. They felt themselves safe in his hands. That was what told, and what ought always to tell. Influence and power over the destinies of other men belong in the end to the men who rid their minds of private and selfish hopes, and who live as before the Judge of all. Men feel themselves safe with those whose lives they recognise to be

The Story of Joseph

governed by the unseen power of God. Power comes to such men, often more than they care to take, always power which they fear to use. But their fear to use it is the guarantee that they recognise their responsibility for it, and that in using it they will not lose their own souls.

2. THE IDEAL AND THE REWARD OF LOVE.

As to the policy which Joseph followed in order to diminish the suffering brought by the famine on the people of Egypt, there is not much that needs to be said here. Such a scheme as is described in detail in Scripture must be judged on its own merits and in view of the conditions of its own time ; and then its discussion is best left in the hands of students of social history. But there is a larger aspect of the question on which a few words may be said. The worldly wisdom which formulates such plans and rightly claims to review them, is always apt to degenerate into a shallow cleverness that does not grasp how a great purpose of all human society and the chief reason why

Joseph's Success

it should exist at all is to keep men alive in famine and to bring them to the highest measure of well-being. It loses sight of the ideal elements that keep human society together, and so loses frequently the spirit of charity. Now charity is so often the larger wisdom. It might have been possible to keep Pharaoh's throne erect, though the rulers, engrossed in care for their own safety, had left the multitudes to die. But Pharaoh's throne was given a more stable foundation, because his policy at this time was controlled by Joseph. And Joseph had known all the changes and chances of human life, and through them all had preserved charity. He had ordered his life in its weakness and in its glory by the holy justice of God. He had kept his heart, in poverty and in wealth, from the control of discontent and selfishness. Such a man is given an insight into the ideal foundations of the most earthly power. Pharaoh was secure and his throne was stayed up, because behind him was one who had not forgotten the heart of a slave even

The Story of Joseph

after he had become the second man in Egypt.

How rich in human sympathy the man remained, in his power as in his day of weakness, the Hebrew writer shows us again. He was prosperous ; he was the king's right-hand man ; he wore the signs of his dignity when he rode abroad among bowing multitudes ; he was married into one of the old families of Egypt. But it was not till his child was laid in his arms that he said, "God hath caused me to forget all my toil, and all my father's house." There speaks the heart of a man, an exile. He has been lonely through the prison, lonely before the throne, lonely in his chariot along the bowing streets, until God in His goodness gave him a home.

This was all a man : a man, when he proved in the dungeon that he could live by principle though none supported him ; a man, when he acknowledged in his success that the heart of a man needs love for its strength and fulness.

VI

THE BRETHREN IN THE FAMINE

VI

THE BRETHREN IN THE FAMINE

THE story never loses sight of the fact that what it has to tell is the birth of a nation ; and so, while it speaks about individual lives, it constantly interweaves their fate and their fortunes with the larger unity of which they form a part. Joseph had gone down into Egypt in order to provide food and a new settlement for his brethren, and from his side everything is ready. Everything is ready except the men : and now the story turns back to tell how they were made ready. Joseph can give his brethren food and land in Goshen, but it needs more than food-supplies and pasture-lands to make a nation. It needs men, and these are not yet the men who can make a nation. Disunited, mutually distrustful, with the memory of

The Story of Joseph

a mutual crime on their consciences and with no great bond of a spiritual sort to bind them together, they would, had they been brought thus into contact with Egypt, have simply dissolved. Egypt would have swallowed them up, and they would have merged into the population of the land where they settled, when they went thither to seek bread.

I. A CHANGE OF ENVIRONMENT.

We are told that a change of environment will bring most other changes behind it, and that food in abundance in place of scarcity, certainty of tenure in room of insecurity, will change everything. The first part of the statement is very greatly true, but the second part, with its underlying definition of environment, only shows how material our judgment has become. Environment is too subtle a thing to be so crassly defined: that is exactly why it is so powerful. There are some things which come closer to a man than the house in which he lives or the food he eats, even the prayers and ideals in which his spirit

The Brethren in the Famine

is at home. Through their power he can transform even the most unfavourable outward surroundings. Without their presence he can sink among the most favourable.

The story tells how the spiritual horizon of the brethren was widened, so that they were bound together into the unity of a people and became capable of remaining Israel even in Egypt.

There was something in the famine itself to quicken their thought. When it fell upon them, their own strength became no longer able to win, their own cleverness no longer competent to plan, subsistence for themselves. Their wonted occupations are gone, and have taken away their self-reliance. They stand, strong men, before their worn-out father and have to acknowledge that he is a better man than they.

At his bidding they go down into Egypt and feel the strength of this old and ordered civilisation. Here men have bound themselves together to meet a catastrophe which they cannot avert. The brethren find human society going on still, though with dragging

The Story of Joseph

wheels, while their own society has tumbled into pieces at the shrewd touch of famine. They feel themselves helpless atoms, with nothing to meet one of the great events which come to all men. And these strong, lustful desert dwellers, accustomed to go on their insolent and self-reliant way, accustomed to want and take, are cowed. The helplessness of man against the mighty forces of the world is driven in upon them. Carried too far, the sense becomes a weakness : but without it how vain and individual and insolent man can be !

There are men about whom a wise man wrote "because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God." Such men are well known. The world has gone well with them. Their business has prospered greatly : and, if there have been troubles, these have been such as human shrewdness could foresee or extra effort put right. They have been little visited by the great things like death and sorrow, or, if they have been visited by these, have put them aside. And their world often shrinks together into the little

The Brethren in the Famine .

world they know. Their morality becomes a code of petty prudence. Their hope shrinks into caution. Such men cannot found a nation where men must rely on each other. Therefore, when God called Abraham, He shook him out of the lap of the accustomed thing to the hills of Palestine. When the people came to its new birth, the patriarchs fled before famine into Egypt.

When they came, Joseph dealt roughly with them. He distrusted their words,—these men who distrusted each other. He cross-questioned them as to their intentions and their past, and finally he flung them into prison. For the liberal air of the hills and the scent of the tamarisk when the dew is drying on it, they have to exchange the close air of a prison in flat Egypt. They, who all their lives have waited on no man's bidding, nor consulted any other's convenience, are at the caprice of one man.

The first outcome is that they learn the uses of a family. They hold together, they maintain each other, they serve each other. They begin to live in social bonds when

The Story of Joseph

they live in prison. It is one of the fatal blindnesses which affect the man who has only known success, that he fails to see how it is not of his own making. He fails to see how he stands on the work and failure, the hope and prayer of dead men. He fails to recognise how, without that slow building up of society in which he had no hand, there would have been no place for his energy and no security. He fails to feel his debt, his quite infinite debt, for all which he has received. He does not realise that the men who serve him are as necessary to him as he is to them. The men learned the gracious meaning of our mutual dependence in prison.

Further, as they sat there, there rose out of the dim recesses of memory a distant day which all had tried to forget, some had succeeded in forgetting. They saw the fresh young face of their brother, convulsed with fear, as they lowered him into the pit. They recalled the hour when they dined together with indifference to his pain. And they saw a fitness in things which

The Brethren in the Famine

ordered that they in turn should be brought so low. "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he besought us and we would not hear. Therefore is this distress come upon us." These were teachable men, in whom their old life had not deadened all sense of the infinite justice of things. And they could see it, not when it was dealing with the universe in general, but when it was dealing with themselves. That God is just, that every base thing a man has done shall find its adequate requital somehow and at some hour, is not, thank God, the ultimate word in religion. But it is a great word, that sense which God in His mercy has set deep in the consciences of men, that "fearful looking for of judgment." And, though deadened in the eager world, it often waits for men when they are shut up to their thoughts.

2. A CHANGE OF ATTITUDE.

The group, graver, humbler, stronger men went back to Palestine. They have

The Story of Joseph

come through strange things and have learned from them, and they returned to their father, who did not know all that had happened to them. He has sat brooding over the past, while they are already thinking new thoughts and feeling their way to a more fruitful future. They came back with a new sense of their solidarity and responsibility. And he tells them "all these things are against *me*." He does not feel that they are likely greatly to care about or understand his sorrows, for he has no reason to believe them capable of realising what the loss of Joseph, the loss of Simeon, and the departure of Benjamin mean to him. And the men must lay their hands on their mouths and recognise that he is just. Their father has but too good cause, from his past knowledge of them, to believe that they are careless of his sorrows, and they will need to prove their changed thoughts by their deeds.

Men who have been deeply moved to new religious convictions or higher ideals of life often find that their world has not moved with them. And it comes upon them like

The Brethren in the Famine

a dash of cold water that their old associates expect from them the same attitude as before, and that good men do not trust them at once. It is startling to discover how immobile the facts of life are for one who has changed his attitude to all the facts of life: and it is a wholesome shock. For men are required to live by the power of every new conviction they win, and only through life does it become their own.

How greatly the brethren learned, and how deep was the change in their character, the story reveals in its own way. It is not the habit of the Hebrew historians to describe men's feelings. There is never any subtle analysis of motives or picture of emotions in the Old Testament. What they give instead is a plain statement of what men did and said, from which it is possible to conclude as to where and how their feelings have changed. Now it is noteworthy how from this stage in the story, tender and beautiful sayings begin to appear in connection with the attitude of the brethren. Thus, when they present their demand for Benjamin to Jacob,

The Story of Joseph

the old father utters words which in their restraint and quietness yet touch the very heart of sorrow. "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away." He cries in his desolation, "all these things are against me." While the words show his isolation from his ten sons and form a just rebuke to them, they also convey the burden of old age, the strain on many women, the sorrow of all the people who have to be passive when others can act. The brethren could go down with Benjamin into Egypt, and, if necessary, try to protect him ; but he must sit at home and wait for news. One feels the anguish of the women and men who are called to bear. Yet, when that cry has been wrung from him, Jacob rises up with a calm dignity and puts aside Judah's proposal to deliver over his children as hostages for Benjamin's safe return. He does not even mention it ; for, if Benjamin were lost through Judah's fault, what use would it be to Jacob to have Judah's sons in his power? "If I am bereaved, I am bereaved."

The Brethren in the Famine

3. A CHANGE OF LIFE.

How keenly the men have felt the situation and how deeply they have been impressed by it, is best seen in Judah's great plea before his unknown brother. "And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one ; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him. . . . Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad be not with us ; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life ; it shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die : and thy servants shall bring down the grey hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave. . . . Now therefore let thy servant, I pray thee, abide instead of the lad ■ bondman to my lord ; and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me ?"

Such things increase in the later chapters, because they are in place there. The men had learned to feel them, as they had never

The Story of Joseph

done before. Judah could say such a thing now, because he could feel such a thing now. The brethren remembered nothing of their father's lament when Joseph's blood-dabbled cloak was spread before him. His lament fell on deaf ears then : it does not fall on deaf ears now, for the men have learned sympathy in the school of adversity.

There is a hard strain in human nature. Few creatures are more cruel than a healthy boy. Strong men will subscribe to infirmaries, but will send their wives to inquire for a sick friend. The infirmary is a convenient place for huddling the sick out of sight, where other men are free from the intolerable claim. The poor-house is a convenient place for relieving the prosperous from the painful claim of the broken-down.

The brethren have seen their children hunger-bitten and have been impotent to give them food. They have tasted for themselves exile, suspicion, prison. They have learned a new humane sense of the infinite pathos of life. Sympathy is suffer-

The Brethren in the Famine

ing along with other men : and, while there are some gracious natures which seem to learn it by instinct, there are more who only learn it through the sharp discipline of God's grace.

The men, then, are greatly changed. They have learned the futility of envy and suspicion, and how mutual trust is the cement which holds life together. Their hearts have been awed by the sense of how the heart of things is just, for they have seen justice, not as a quality of which they desire to see more in the world, but as bringing them in guilty. Their souls have been touched to the tender uses of pity.

What remains to be required from them ? This remains, the proof that they have departed from their sin and can be trusted anew with life. It is one thing to hate an old sin at the time when it has brought a man to failure ; it is another not to do it again, when it seems the only means of escape from failure.

So, on what seemed their final and cheerful return from Egypt, the steward overtook

The Story of Joseph

them with a loud accusation of theft. Sack by sack was emptied ; and with each fruitless search their triumph over a false accuser grew. At last the sack of the youngest showed gleaming among the rustling wheat the redder gold of the hateful cup. And at once, without question or hesitation, they reloaded their asses, turned their backs on their hopes of home, and, with their younger brother in their midst, went back to bondage.

Consider what they did. They refused to fall back into the sin of the selfish betrayal of their brother. It would have been easier to do, and far easier to justify than in the case of Joseph. What offers itself to them is not exactly the same temptation ; but it never is the same temptation that is offered to any one. Life never takes men back to the old place where they fell before : it brings them to new places. So the thoughtless say that experience is useless, because experience never repeats itself. In truth, nothing ever repeats itself. There is always some colouring in the sky which makes each sunset something unique : and there

The Brethren in the Famine

is always some shade of difference between yesterday's temptation and that of to-day which makes men able to say, if they desire it, that they were taken by surprise. That is why Christ gave men, not a rule which will only fit the conditions that gave rise to it, but an ideal which will fit every condition.

It was possible that Benjamin had stolen that cup. In any case, to deliver him up was only to make sure that the matter should be inquired into and justice done. That being so, there was no reason why they should all go back with him, and delay for some time longer the needed relief for their starving families in Palestine. Indeed, in view of the urgent needs of the women and children it might even be expedient that one man die for the people and so the whole nation perish not. Any one with a little imagination can frame an excellent case for their riding on. But they acted on their first impulse, the impulse of humbled and repentant hearts, and they went back. Uncondemned they will not leave Benjamin alone. Friendless they will not leave him

The Story of Joseph

at all. The men have learned once for all that they cannot again deny the brotherly love which they once denied. Experience has been enough to make their repentance into that gracious thing which watches against the return of sin, that holy carefulness which is a safeguard. Their victory has been won.

VII

THE RECONCILIATION

VII

THE RECONCILIATION

It is deeply interesting and instructive to notice how the attitude of the ten brethren changes. They appear at the beginning so confident in themselves, and so prompt in dealing with a situation as it emerges. They know exactly what to do, when the business before them is that of dealing with a difficult younger brother, and they have a ready scheme to meet the questions of their father as to what has become of his favourite son. But life grows larger and full of strange issues which they are not able to measure or control. They stand bewildered before the novelty of the famine. Yet that is only a physical condition, and their bewilderment merely proves that they have something to learn. But from that time their estate be-

The Story of Joseph

comes always more complex and more difficult.

I. A POWER THAT BAFFLES AND BEWILDERS.

It is as though they were in the grasp of some greater force, which was bearing them on, whether they will or not, to an end which they cannot foresee. They are like men who are borne down by a cataract which they cannot stem. They are forced to look back into their past and to recall to memory the old sin which they had long forgotten : they are brought face to face with a stern justice in things, which controls their actions and even their thoughts. One event after another befalls them with which they feel themselves powerless to deal. They do not know how to answer suspicion or to meet the accusation of being spies ; they do not know what to do about the money which has been restored to them. Bewilderment pursues them, so that they cannot find their way. Yet, bit by bit, they learn how to deal with each situation as it rises. From life they learn humility and a new sense of

The Reconciliation

loyalty and truth and sincerity and honour towards their brother. And at the end they find in the strange force which has baffled and bewildered them the figure of their wronged brother. And he assures them of his unchanged affection and of his entire confidence in them. He gives them therewith more than food and shelter and safety, for he gives them back confidence in themselves, and reconciles them anew with life.

Men have often seen in that attitude of Joseph a type of Jesus Christ ; and, though the analogy has been carried into those details which are a perpetual snare to the student of types, the parallel is on broad lines very close. Men are still troubled and perplexed, as the brethren were. They have for a time gone their own way, taking things as they came, without much thought as to whether there is any definite end to human life ; and therefore they have not hesitated to admit into their lives certain baser elements. They have escaped from some perplexities by lies ; they have obtained pleasures for which they hungered by dis-

The Story of Joseph

loyalty to honour. There are, accordingly, some things in their lives which it is not pleasant to recall ; but men enter into the common conspiracy of silence, which agrees to shroud such matters by ignoring them. They resolve to do as the world does, which is to live as though these things were not there. Somehow or other,—nobody presumes to say how,—that which is crooked will become straight, if only nobody calls it crooked or thinks of it as crooked. Somehow or other matters will right themselves.

2. A POWER, THAT MAKES FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

In the experience of many men, life, suddenly as it might seem and unaccountably, begins to persist in showing that it has moral issues and in bringing them home. Some force has been loosened by their action, which seems now to act of its own accord. Matters do not right themselves, but rather persist in showing themselves all wrong. Uneasiness, which often passes into dull remorse, begins to weigh heavily on the heart. It can be dispelled by close attention

The Reconciliation

to other interests or by excitement, but it comes back. It can be kept as much as possible at arm's-length : but, even when it is not acutely felt, it remains as a cloud over the spirit, a damper to real joy, a weight on all forward looking hopes. Or the shortness of life begins to thrust itself on the attention. That also men can keep by active eagerness at arm's-length ; but sometimes the arms are too weary and the anxiety too great for them to succeed in keeping anything off. It begins to creep in when it will. Joy and sorrow alike help to call for it : joy, because it is so short-lived and so uncertain ; sorrow, because it has such tremendous power to make all men sincere. And so the thought of it, the mastering thought of it, takes slow possession of the heart.

Men discover then, as the ten brethren did, that they are in the hands of some power which is older and stronger than themselves, which is drawing them on, however much against their will, which is impelling them to an end that they cannot welcome because they cannot foresee it. Life

The Story of Joseph

discovers how it is not a haphazard thing, but a unity. It reveals how every deed and thought go out from men's careless lives to become a tissue of consequences from which they cannot break free. Life makes ever clearer how it has its great issues appointed by One who through it fulfils His tremendous and unchangeable purpose : and men are and often betray how they are like creatures that are trapped and cannot escape.

3. A POWER THAT MAKES FOR MERCY.

But, when men deal with that strange life sincerely and with singleness of purpose, they are brought to meet Him "who is able to open the book." They find how God has not troubled them in vain, but has called them to see the large and liberal purpose that is through all the tangle of human life. And Christ transforms life ; for the constraining power against which they have fought so long becomes the wise and great and holy will of the Father. To accept it frankly, to fling aside all evasions, to be done with false refuges, is to be reconciled with life, and

The Reconciliation

to find how the tangle simplifies itself slowly and steadily. "In His will is our peace," and in submission to it our strength. So often men fight against it, even as little children, fretful and sleepy, fight against the sleep which would make all their fretfulness impossible. But when they cast off insincerity and false choices and deal truly with themselves, the forgiveness of God will avail to make life new, because it avails to make anew the men who meet it.

Joseph forgave his brethren : and that seems to many a very natural and simple thing to do in the circumstances. But along with his forgiveness he also said a singularly great and far-reaching thing, for he told them of his conviction that through all their past and his past had run an overruling purpose of good, and that God, without their knowledge and apart from their intention, had used their hard-heartedness and cruelty toward their brother in order to prepare a home for all Israel in Egypt. How did he come to utter that in such a connection and, from a slight matter like

The Story of Joseph

his forgiveness, to draw so vast a conclusion? Is it not because, when one touches forgiveness at all, whether in giving or in receiving it, one is in contact with something which in its own nature is of the highest and gives rise to endless thoughts? In forgiveness, spirit deals with spirit directly. In forgiveness, men are dealing not first with things nor even with the consequences of acts, not with laws, but with God. There God breaks in, as it were, on life; and we become conscious of how even the evil we have done, with all its terrible and apparently irretrievable consequences, is not outside His control. He can master it, since He can give new hope to us who have committed it. Forgiveness is a miracle, it is indeed *the* miracle of grace; and as such it is apt to lift us up to a wider view of what it implies to be in God's hands. He can govern even evil; He governed even evil, when we gave Him in our lives little else, to fulfil something of His ends. Is not that what the life, humbled, repentant, weak, awake to a sense of what it has done,

The Reconciliation

craves to know? And in the assurance of forgiveness it finds what it needs. God has governed the past, even when we forgot Him. He made something out of the poor service which we offered Him. Men, who see His face in forgiveness and the wonder of His power and mercy, can set their faces humbly forward. For God, who could control them even in their rebellion, can out of their repentant lives build up something which will become a part of His almighty purpose for good.

VIII

THE END : JOSEPH AND JACOB

VIII

THE END : JOSEPH AND JACOB

EVEN the most careless reader cannot fail to notice how broken and confused the closing accounts are. In the earlier chapters there is one commanding interest, round which all the rest are so grouped that they fall naturally into their place. But, as the story draws to its close, we pass from a list of the sons of Jacob who transferred themselves into Egypt to an account of Jacob before Pharaoh, from that personal and moving scene to a relation of the public policy which Joseph pursued during the period of the famine, from that again to another intimate scene of Jacob blessing his grandchildren. In great part the piecemeal character of the narrative is the evidence of how in its present form it has come to us

The Story of Joseph

from several writers, each of whom had his own peculiar interest. Hitherto we have been under the guidance of a special historian who gathered his material from different sources, but who wove that material together with great skill into a continued narrative. Here and there a closer examination shows that he has owed his account to different sources which can still be disentangled ; but he has used these with great skill to make a unity. The closing sections rather show the materials taken from different sources and lying side by side. They are not woven together ; the one thing which connects them is that they bear on the early history of Israel in Egypt.

I. THE PATERNAL BLESSING.

The brethren have found their place, and now the two men in the family, the two men who have made it, are left face to face. And there is something very fine in the instinctive respect which Joseph shows to his old father. He is represented as having risen to the position of being next to the king of Egypt ;

The End : Joseph and Jacob

he has practically saved all his father's house from death by famine. He and his sons have enjoyed opportunities which neither his brothers nor his father ever had. He is a great man. And, because he is really a great man in soul as well as estate, he no sooner hears that Jacob is ill than he comes to ask for the old man's blessing and counsel.

The strong family tie has always been characteristic of Judaism. The house-father was counted priest and chief in his own home ; and those who owed him life and later advancement were expected to acknowledge it. Joseph was no isolated, fortunate adventurer in Egypt. He belonged to a people, and so he brought his sons, the children of an Egyptian mother, to take the blessing of his father.

Perhaps, too, Joseph has recognised the latent power in Jacob since he himself came to bear responsibility in Egypt. Men looked to him for guidance ; with the usual irresoluteness of humanity they preferred to put the cares of their government on a capable man. And he has found that the only thing

The Story of Joseph

a man can do then is to trust God and trust himself and take the responsibility. He has not been in the habit of looking round irresolutely for other men's lead. And that habit of his life has brought him to a deeper respect for his father. It was the same thing Jacob was called to do, and it was in the same spirit that he tried to do it. In the end the government of a kingdom and the management of a clan call for the same qualities of mind and soul. It is only the scope of the affairs in which the qualities are exercised which is different. Joseph has learned to respect the qualities of the soul, however narrow be the sphere in which they are exercised ; and so he, before whom all Egypt uncovers, uncovers his head before Jacob.

A son who stands a little higher because his father was there before him, gains a broader experience and a better training. Sometimes he comes back to find his father busy with what he is tempted to call trifling, parochial affairs. He does not always see that it needs the same powers to deal worthily with small things as it does with great things.

The End : Joseph and Jacob

Men fail at times to see that it is not the conditions of his work which make a man great, but the way he meets them : and so they talk about great transactions, where they should rather note the power of a man to deal with any transactions at all. Joseph saw behind the rough desert coat of his father a great soul working its way to clearness ; and he put off his royal ornaments and bowed down before Jacob.

2. THE PATERNAL EXPERIENCE.

Jacob could speak to such a son about his real life, about the things which moulded him and made him. He feels that he is finishing his course, and he tells his like-minded son about the matters which went for most and had power. It is always interesting to listen while a man talks about the things which mattered to him ; because men are so busy that in the crowd of interests they forget how, when they are done with things and things are done with them, there remain their own souls. It is often said that some one has died and left a great deal,

The Story of Joseph

while it would be more correct to say that he has taken away all that life could give him, and that only what life gave him is of any final importance at all. When a man comes to the place where it seems as though everything had come to an end, the great concerns lift themselves up and thrust the smaller out of sight : and the great concerns are those which influenced him. Some of them, from the point of view of other men, are of quite insignificant importance : but from the point of view of eternity they are of quite supreme importance. They told upon his outlook and his thought, and made him what he is as he faces the great future. Now it is only the soul which faces the great future.

There are three events which stand out in the old man's memory, distinct among the mists of time. There is the day when he left his father's tent and after a long flight slept a lonely boy on the hills at Bethel. He took his life into his own hands then for good or for ill, and set himself to the task of his life with the responsibility for it in his own hands. Hitherto he has

The End : Joseph and Jacob

been at others' bidding, and has felt himself accountable to them : now he may well feel as though he were accountable to none but himself for the way in which he bears himself in this new world, where he may go where he will and do what he will. All the world seems to lie before him : and he can choose, with no one who may determine his choice or examine it. That is a heady wine for a boy to drink.

So there followed the night when Jacob saw how near God stands to human life, and when he recognised how there was One to whom he was finally responsible. It is a very fine thing to be free, and, with all the world before one, to have the opportunity to prove what one can do : but, like all other fine things, it depends for its value on what men do with it. There is a great deal of pernicious nonsense talked about freedom, because men fail to recognise that liberty is only liberty to do something, and the value of the liberty greatly depends on what men do. The worth of liberty consists in giving men freedom to choose, and their

The Story of Joseph

worth consists in making the right choice. Jacob saw over him One who had the right and the intention to call him to account. He saw God with His claims on men, urgent and never to be put aside : and he saw the dignity and worth of his human and fugitive life to lie in the fact that it was something for which God could and did care. To that tremendous extent it mattered what he did with it.

There followed to Jacob the day when he came back from Paddan-aram, "the day when Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way." He lingers over that, not in the modern way of describing his feelings when it took place, but in the simpler way of describing the place itself. And in describing the place he makes one realise the situation. There is the sense of the hurried journey, as men tried to race with death, "when there was but a little way to come to Ephrath." There is the homelessness, how she who made him a home died "in the way." There is the inexorable nature of death, in that he could arrange his lodging

The End: Joseph and Jacob

and his goal, but the place of the grave was determined for him. There is the separation which pressed the more keenly, for it was on a journey, and he must push on and leave even the grave behind.

That was a day that could not be forgotten by Jacob, when the love which had made life gracious was gone, and gone for ever. He had to leave it behind, and yet what made it so unforgettable was that he could not leave it behind. It made him what he was. He had lived; for to win love and to be capable of a great love is to live. Not merely to have won love, though that is a great thing, but to have spent love, to have given all one's love away—that is to have lived. A man may need to go on and leave that behind, but he cannot leave it behind, for it will not be left. He has given himself away: and life never seems so high and so wonderful as when a man has given himself away.

That has been my life, Jacob seems to say to Joseph. I took it into my own hands, young, ignorant, unfriended, foolish:

The Story of Joseph

but I took it as something which must be lived. I took it again out of God's hands, when He came to me in the night-visions, and spoke about responsibility and a possible guidance and companionship. I took it then as something to which He promised an end. I took it in love, which promised much and brought more. It brought life and sorrow and death. Few and evil have been the days of the years of my pilgrimage : but it has been a pilgrimage to an end which God appointed : and I have lived the days to the full in trust in an almighty Protector.

And now behold I die : but God shall be with you. And the angel which hath redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads ; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac : and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

3. THE PATERNAL EXAMPLE.

From that death-bed, full of wise courage and imperishable hope, the narrator passes to speak of the command which Joseph gave

The End : Joseph and Jacob

his brothers, when he himself came to die, that his bones were not to be left behind in Egypt, but to be carried up by their descendants into the land which God had sworn to give to their fathers. The incident is used in the New Testament as an illustration of triumphant faith, confident, in spite of all seeming obstacles, that the final purpose of God must triumph and the promise of God must be proved sure. And such, of course, it is, though there are higher proofs of faith than that. The man who had been raised from slave to vizier, who had seen his father's house transferred from starving Palestine to fat Egypt, might find it easy to believe that everything was possible to God. Faith has stood harder tests in men, who, with all outward things adverse to their hopes, refused to suffer the lamp of their hope to die down. It may be, then, that the legacy of the bones was also a grim Hebrew parable to remind the people that they were on pilgrimage, and that by all the memories of their dead and all the hopes of their fathers they dared not settle,

The Story of Joseph

with ungirt loins and quenched lamps, in fat Goshen. To associate such a legacy with Joseph had its peculiar significance, for no one knew better than he the danger against which he bade his nation be on their guard. He knew the seduction of Egypt, where life was secure, against the hill-land, where famine soon starved the inhabitants. He had tasted power and the delight of making all Egypt own the strength of an alien. He knew how these things stole round men's hearts and led them to forget the liberty which is among the hills and the patriotism which loves its land because of the children it breeds, and not because of the onions and the leeks and the garlic which its rich soil is capable of bearing. So he left the legacy of his bones as a double and grim reminder. They were a reminder of the brevity of life, lest the men should live as though they had all time as their slave and suppliant. They were a reminder of that better country of which they were appointed citizens after the purpose of God, although they were dwellers in Egypt for

The End: Joseph and Jacob

a season. And the people were to live as men on a pilgrimage with their loins girt, ready for a journey, quick to hear their God's bidding, whenever it pleased Him to send them a summons that they go out as His freemen to such a city, a continuing city.

After this fashion the wise-hearted Jewish historian told how the foundations of the national life were laid. He wrote of its outward fate, how it seemed to be the sport of circumstance and suffered sore things from famine, how it was torn from its native hills and lived among strangers under an alien sky. He told how God made kings its nursing fathers, and raised up out of the nation itself men of a clear mind and a large heart. He showed how their unity came, not merely through their owning the same parentage or inhabiting the same country, but through their inheritance of a common spirit which they learned to share. They had their heroes, whose greatness consisted in their unselfish devotion. But, above all, he told how there ran through all their

The Story of Joseph

history a purpose which made them look away from earth to God. From the beginning they waited upon God, as men who, having gained much from His hands, always expected more. They were learning how men, in dark and difficult times, could find these tolerable through the power of faith. And everything which God made possible to them became a means by which He meant to summon them to a nobler end, and made more clear to their hopes some braver promise of His mercy.

APPENDIX

STUDENTS, who wish to know more about the sources and origin of the stories which appear in a united form in the episode of Joseph, are referred to Dr. Skinner's volume on Genesis in the "International Critical Commentary" (Scribner's, 1911). The volume has been recently issued, and the author's knowledge of all the work which has been done on Genesis is wide and thorough. Hence he is able, not only to supply his own mature and well-considered view of each question that arises, but to give references which can guide a student to detailed work on all such questions.

To those who have a working knowledge of German, Dr. Gunkel's volume on Genesis can be heartily recommended. The author combines with sound learning a sense of what is meant by good literature and a flair for spiritual truth.

For the history of the period any modern

Appendix

history of Israel may be consulted with profit. The older histories did little more than extract and arrange the material offered by the Bible itself. One of the most competent and suggestive volumes on the subject is Wellhausen's *Sketch of the History of Israel and Judah* (A. & C. Black). A briefer, but very useful, volume is R. L. Ottley's *Short History of the Hebrews* (Cambridge University Press).

Dr. Dods' volume on Genesis in the "Expositor's Bible" (Hodder & Stoughton) contains much valuable homiletic material. The author shows, eminently in his treatment of the Joseph story, his power of applying principles to the conditions of modern life, and is peculiarly conscious of the needs and difficulties which press on men in commercial life. The volume has little to offer beyond this, but all it offers along its own line is of value.

On different lines but valuable and suggestive is J. Strahan's *Hebrew Ideals* (Scribner's). The book is full of thoughtful work, and is written in a good style.

INDEX OF SUBJECTS

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p> BEREAVEMENT, 57, 116.
 Bewilderment, 98.
 Capacity, inherent, 8, 20.
 Character, the deepening of,
 40, 70.
 Charity, 75.
 Discipline, 25, 82.
 Dreams, interpreting of, 42,
 54.
 Environment, power of, 80.
 Envy, 8 ff.
 Faith, 119.
 Family honour, 111.
 Fear, right use of, 85.
 Forgiveness, 103.
 Freedom, 115.
 Future, key of the, 23.
 History, sacred, 7.
 Ideal, manly, 43.
 Ideals, opposing, 23.
 Ingratitude, 37. </p> | <p> Life, making the most of, 28.
 Love, 76, 117.
 Mercy, 102.
 Obligation, social, 84.
 Passive, the strain of being,
 88.
 Providence, the Vindication
 of, 58 ff.
 Purpose, God's widening, 6.
 Religion, incalculable, 45.
 Repentance, 94.
 Riches, deceitfulness of, 120.
 Righteousness, 100.
 Self-forgetfulness, 30.
 Sincerity, 103.
 Soured under injustice, 26 f.
 Success, 70 ff.
 Sympathy, 90.
 Temptation, 32.
 Vanity, 39.
 Youth and age, 53, 114. </p> |
|--|---|

THE SHORT COURSE SERIES

EDITED BY
Rev. JOHN ADAMS, B.D.

This Series is designed to encourage a healthy reaction in the direction of expository preaching. Leading expositors in all the Churches have kindly promised assistance; and the Series, to be issued at the uniform price of 60 cents net per volume, will furnish a sufficiently large variety for individual selection.

NOW READY

A CRY FOR JUSTICE: A Study in Amos.

By Prof. J. E. MCFADYEN, D.D., U. F. C. College,
Glasgow.

THE BEATITUDES.

By Rev. ROBERT H. FISHER, D.D., Edinburgh.

THE LENTEN PSALMS.

By the EDITOR.

THE PSALM OF PSALMS.

By Prof. JAMES STALKER, D.D., Aberdeen.

THE SONG AND THE SOIL.

By Prof. W. G. JORDAN, D.D., Kingston, Ontario.

THE HIGHER POWERS OF THE SOUL.

By Rev. GEORGE M'HARDY, D.D., Kirkcaldy.

JEHOVAH-JESUS.

By Rev. THOMAS WHITELAW, D.D., Kilmarnock.

THE SEVENFOLD I AM.

By Rev. THOMAS MARJORIBANKS, B.D., Edinburgh.

THE MAN AMONG THE MYRTLES: A Study in Zechariah's Visions.

By the EDITOR.

SOCIAL STUDIES.

By Rev. CANON SIMPSON, M.A., D.D., St. Paul's
London.

BELIEF AND LIFE: Expositions in the Fourth Gospel.

By Principal W. B. SELBIE, D.D., Mansfield College,
Oxford.

THE EMOTIONS OF JESUS.

By Prof. ROBERT LAW, D.D., Toronto.

THE OVERTURES OF JESUS.

By Rev. NEWELL DWIGHT HILLIS, D.D., Brooklyn.

SCENES FROM THE LIFE OF DAVID.

By Prof. H. R. MACKINTOSH, D.D., Edinburgh.

THE PROPHECY OF MICAH.

By Principal A. J. TAIT, M.A., Ridley Hall, Cambridge.

THE EXPOSITORY VALUE OF THE REVISED VERSION.

By Prof. G. MILLIGAN, D.D., University of Glasgow.

A PREFACE TO THE GOSPEL: An Exposition of Isaiah 55.

By Rev. A. SMELLIE, D.D., Carlisle.

THE SON OF MAN.

By Prof. ANDREW C. ZENOS, D.D., Chicago.

READINGS IN THE GOSPEL OF ST. LUKE.

By Prof. W. EMERY BARNES, D.D., Cambridge.

THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON.

By Principal A. E. GARVIE, D.D., New College, London.

NOW READY

THE STORY OF JOSEPH.

By Rev. ADAM C. WELCH, B.D., Th.D., Glasgow.

THE DIVINE DRAMA OF JOB.

By Rev. CHARLES F. AKED, D.D., San Francisco.

A MIRROR OF THE SOUL: Studies in the Psalter.

By Rev. CANON VAUGHAN, M.A., Winchester.

IN THE UPPER ROOM.

By Rev. D. J. BURRILL, D.D., LL.D., New York.

**The Following Other Volumes are in
Preparation.**

THE SEVEN WORDS FROM THE CROSS.

By Rev. A. B. MACAULAY, M.A., Stirling.

THE PRAYERS OF ST. PAUL.

By Prof. W. G. GRIFFITH THOMAS, D.D., Toronto.

THE METAPHORS OF ST. PAUL.

By Rev. A. BOYD SCOTT, B.D., Glasgow.

THE HOLY SPIRIT.

By Rev. F. STUART-GARDINER, B.D., Kingstown,
Ireland.

THE REDEMPTION OF GOD.

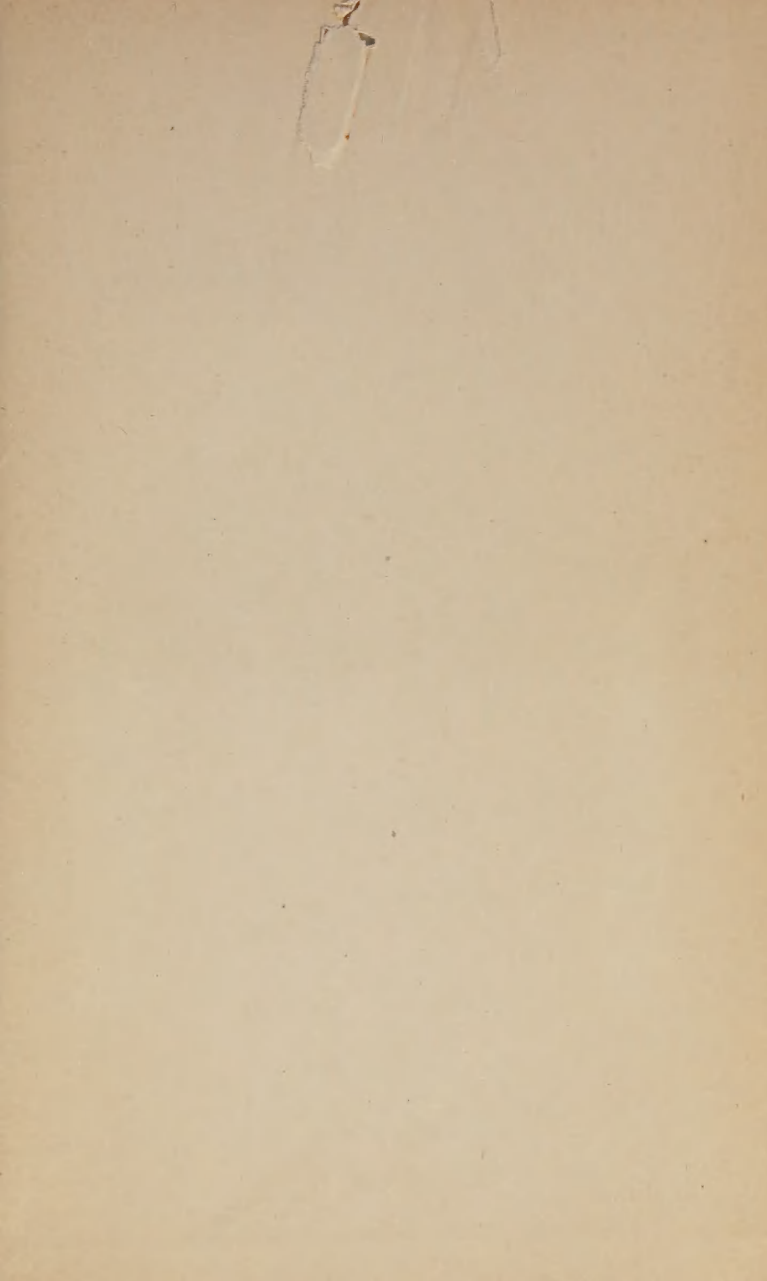
By Prof. T. B. KILPATRICK, D.D., Toronto.

STUDIES IN THE APOCALYPSE.

By Prof. W. T. DAVISON, D.D., Richmond.

EXPOSITORY STUDIES.

By Prof. ARTHUR S. PEAKE, D.D., Manchester.



BS1235.2 .W4
Welch, Adam Cleghorn, 1864-1943.
The story of Joseph.

1467

Welch, Adam Cleghorn, 1864-1943.
35.2 The story of Joseph. New York, C. Scribner
Sons, 1913.
vii, [1], 125p. 19cm. (The short course
series no.10)

331274

1. Joseph, the patriarch. I. Title.
II. Series: Short course series, 10.

CCSC/ehw

